

**Statement by Rep. Ron Kind  
House Budget Committee  
ANWR Drilling  
March 12, 2003**

MR. CHAIRMAN, I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO VOICE BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE MY OPPOSITION TO DRILLING IN THE ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (ANWR). AS RANKING MEMBER OF THE ENERGY AND MINERALS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE, I HAVE STATED REPEATEDLY THAT OPENING THIS NATIONAL TREASURE TO OIL AND NATURAL GAS DEVELOPMENT SHOULD NOT BE PART OF A RESPONSIBLE NATIONAL ENERGY STRATEGY. WHEN I LOOK AT THE FACTS OF THE CASE, DRILLING JUST DOES NOT MAKE SENSE.

ANWR IS ONE OF THE LAST TRULY WILD PLACES IN OUR COUNTRY REMAINING TO REMIND US OF WHAT AMERICA ONCE WAS. UNDISTURBED BY MAN, VISITORS ARE ABLE TO WHITNESS NATURE AS GOD INTENDED IT. GREAT HERDS OF CARIBOU AND MUSKOXEN, POLAR AND GRIZZLY BEARS, SEALS AND SEA LIONS, AND MILLIONS OF BIRDS LIVE IN A CAREFUL BALANCE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AND LOCAL INDIGINOUS PEOPLES. THIS DELICATE BALANCE WOULD BE IMPERILED BY THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT CAUSED BY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THIS FRAGILE ECOSYSTEM.

SPECULATIONS PROPOSED BY INTERESTED PARTIES SUCH AS THE OIL INDUSTRY, ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS, AND POLITICIANS ABOUT THE EXTENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE CAUSED BY DRILLING HAVE VARIED WILDLY. TODAY I WOULD LIKE TO MOVE BEYOND SPECULATION AND LOOK TO THE ONE INDEPENDENT STUDY THAT HAS BEEN PERFORMED ON THE SUBJECT AND TALK ABOUT FACT. JUST LAST WEEK THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCE'S NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL RELEASED A REPORT ON THE CUMULATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF OIL AND GAS ACTIVITIES ON ALASKA'S NORTH SLOPE. THE STUDY WAS MANDATED BY CONGRESS AND SPONSORED BY THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY. IT ANALYZED THE AREA WEST OF ANWR WHICH IS ALREADY OPEN TO DRILLING AND WAS THE FIRST STUDY TO ASSESS THE CUMULATIVE RATHER THAN ISOLATED EFFECTS. THE RESULTS SPOKE CONVINCINGLY AGAINST OPENING UP DRILLING ON LANDS THAT HAVE BEEN SET ASIDE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF WILDLIFE AND WILDLANDS.

WHILE THE OIL AND GAS INDUSTRIES HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN REDUCING THE FOOTPRINT LEFT ON THE LAND BY THEIR OPERATIONS, THE STUDY FOUND AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF ROADS, PIPELINES, AND OFF-ROAD TRACKS THAT DID HAVE EFFECTS ON WILDLIFE HABITAT AND BEHAVIOR, ROADSIDE FLOODING AND SNOW ACCUMULATION, THAWING OF PERMAFROST, AND THAT ALTERED WATER FLOW AND TUNDRA

VEGETATION. THESE ROADS AND OFF-ROAD TRAILS HAVE OPENED UP AREAS PREVIOUSLY INACCESSIBLE TO HUMANS, SPREADING THE HUMAN FOOTPRINT ONTO PREVIOUSLY UNDISTURBED LANDS.

THE COUNCIL FOUND SPECIFIC EFFECTS ON VARIOUS ANIMAL POPULATIONS. BOWHEAD WHALES, A MAJOR PART OF THE DIET AND COMMERCE OF THE INUPIAT ESKIMOS, HAVE CHANGED THEIR FALL MIGRATION ROUTES DUE TO THE NOISE OF OFF-SHORE SEISMIC EXPLORATION. THE GARBAGE AND FOOD PROVIDED BY INCREASED NUMBERS OF WORKERS HAS RESULTED IN HIGHER THAN NORMAL PREDATOR DENSITY, LOWERING THE REPRODUCTIVE RATES OF SEVERAL BIRD SPECIES. INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES HAVE INCREASED STRESS ON CARIBOU HERDS AND REDUCED THEIR ABILITY TO COPE WITH OTHER, NATURAL DISTURBANCES. WHILE THE OVERALL POPULATIONS OF CARIBOU AND BIRDS HAVE REMAINED RELATIVELY CONSTANT IN THE DEVELOPED AREAS, THIS STABILITY HAS RESULTED FROM THE IMMIGRATION OF NEW ANIMALS FROM SOURCE POPULATIONS SUCH AS THOSE IN ANWR, OFFSETTING THE LOSSES CONNECTED WITH HUMAN ACTIVITY. IF OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT SPREADS INTO ANWR, THERE WILL BE NO POPULATION RESERVES TO KEEP UP ANIMAL NUMBERS.

THE STUDY CONCLUDED THAT EFFECTS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ARE LIKELY TO BE LONG-LASTING. THE EXTREME CONDITIONS AND SMALL

GROWING SEASON GIVE ECOSYSTEMS LITTLE TIME TO RECOVER.

CURRENT REGULATIONS GOVERNING RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLEANING UP INDUSTRIAL SITES AND MITIGATING ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGES ARE UNCLEAR, AND ABANDONED SITES AND FACILITIES REMAIN IN PLACE. WITHOUT REGULATORY IMPETUS, ROADS, PADS, AND PIPELINES ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN FOR MANY YEARS TO COME AND REHABILITATION WILL NOT OCCUR, AS IT HAS NOT OCCURRED IN THE AREAS ALREADY DEVELOPED.

PROPONENTS OF DRILLING HAVE MADE THEIR CASE THAT THEY HAVE IMPROVED THEIR PRACTICES AND REDUCED THE IMPRINT THEY LEAVE ON THE LAND. THIS STUDY CLEARLY SHOWS THAT, WHILE IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE, THE CUMULATIVE EFFECTS OF OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT ON THE ENVIRONMENT ARE STILL NEGATIVE AND WIDESPREAD.

PROPONENTS HAVE ALSO CITED THE ECONOMIC GROWTH THAT WILL ACCOMPANY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT TO THE REGION. LABOR UNIONS HAVE CLAIMED THAT AS MANY AS 500,000 JOBS WILL BE CREATED. THE NAS STUDY DID OBSERVE MANY POSITIVE EFFECTS ON LOCAL ECONOMIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE INFLUX OF JOBS AND HIGHER WAGES. OIL DEVELOPMENT BROUGHT ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES SUCH AS BETTER HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION. BUT WHAT IS TO HAPPEN TO

THESE COMMUNITIES WHEN THE OIL RUNS OUT AND THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF JOBS ARE TERMINATED? PEOPLE WILL BE LESS ABLE TO DEAL WITH THIS DOWNTURN IN THE ECONOMY AFTER BECOMING ACCUSTOMED TO A HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING. THE STUDY ALSO NOTED INCREASES IN ALCOHOLISM AND DIABETES THAT ARE DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE INCREASE IN WAGES. TEMPORARY JOBS ARE NOT AN ANSWER IN AN ISOLATED AREA WITH NO OTHER PROSPECTS OF ECONOMIC STIMULUS.

THE MAJOR ARGUMENT FOR OPENING ANWR TO DRILLING HAS CENTERED AROUND AMERICA'S NEED FOR ENERGY INDEPENDENCE. AS I HAVE STATED BEFORE, ATTEMPTING TO DRILL OUR WAY OUT OF OUR CURRENT ENERGY CRISIS IS IRRESPONSIBLE. THE AVERAGE ESTIMATE FOR THE AMOUNT OF RECOVERABLE OIL PRESENT IN ANWR HOVERS AROUND 10 BILLION BARRELS. THE U.S. CURRENTLY CONSUMES APPROXIMATELY 7 BILLION BARRELS EACH YEAR. THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY ESTIMATES THAT OIL RECOVERED FROM THE ARCTIC REFUGE WOULD AMOUNT TO LESS THAN A SIX MONTH SUPPLY FOR AMERICAN CONSUMERS. AT NO TIME WOULD OIL FROM THE REFUGE BE EXPECTED TO AMOUNT TO MORE THAN ABOUT 2 PERCENT OF U.S. DEMAND. ALSO, THE OIL FROM THE AREA WILL TAKE FROM TEN TO TWENTY YEARS TO REACH THE AMERICAN MARKET AND, THEREFORE, IS NOT GOING TO IMPROVE OUR ENERGY INDEPENDENCE ANY TIME SOON.

THESE MINISCULE GAINS IN OIL PRODUCTION DO NOT JUSTIFY THE DESTRUCTION OF ONE OF THE GREATEST ECOLOGICAL WONDERS LEFT IN OUR COUNTRY, AND INDEED, IN THE WORLD. INCREASING THE FUEL EFFICIENCY STANDARD FOR SUV'S TO THE SAME LEVEL AS CARS WILL SAVE AS MUCH OIL EACH YEAR AS CAN BE RECOVERED FROM ANWR, AND THE SAVINGS WOULD CONTINUE LONG AFTER THE OIL IN ALASKA WOULD RUN DRY. WE MUST FOCUS OUR EFFORTS ON CREATING A BALANCED, RESPONSIBLE ENERGY POLICY THAT WILL EMPHASIZE CONSERVATION AND EFFICIENCY OVER INCREASED PRODUCTION; DEVELOPING CLEAN, SUSTAINABLE SOURCES OVER EXPLOITING POLLUTING, LIMITED RESERVES. WE WILL HAVE TO ANSWER TO OUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN FOR THE ACTIONS WE TAKE TODAY. LET US BE SURE THAT WE MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS, NOT ONLY FOR OURSELVES, BUT FOR ALL FUTURE GENERATIONS.